

stage. Even as the 20 inches of rain that fell begins to clear, the flooding remains. Dangerous and powerful currents are flowing, sweeping citizens away, like the family of four from Pinetops, like the 18-wheelers being driven along I-95, or like the sedan pushed in the pile of water, at least 4 feet of water, in Wilson, North Carolina.

Thousands and thousands of homes remain now underwater. Trees are down. Power remains out for nearly 50,000 households. Now, that is down from the more than 1.5 million that were initially without electricity. Water and sewage systems are in disrepair. Shelters are housing thousands of citizens.

Today the FEMA director said in North Carolina there are 35,000 homes affected. More than 100,000 hogs have been lost, 2.4 million chickens, 500 turkeys killed. Disease and contamination is a real and dangerous threat, as animals' carcasses clutter the roads.

Coffins dredged up by the flooding have been seen floating in Goldsboro and Wilson. Gasoline from flooded stations is now in the water. Industrial waste is mixing with the other toxic material, creating an unsafe and unsanitary health environment.

□ 2045

Yet among all this tragedy there are bright spots. The President released more than 520 million to FEMA to address immediate needs, then visit my district last Monday, and my colleagues joined me there, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE). The President's visit brought hope even to those who were hopeless, and we appreciate the effort of FEMA to provide the ready made meals ready to eat, ice, blankets, water, temporary housing, grants and loans, and emergency generators. We also appreciate the hundreds and hundreds of individuals from around this country who are on the grounds helping us out. The private sector is also responding. Red Cross has opened more than 49 shelters in our State. The Salvation Army has 31 mobile kitchens.

Yet much more, much more help and support is needed from citizens around this country and from my colleagues right here. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I intend to join with Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis from other impacted areas to try to send a legislative package for further relief for the President to sign. As a part of that package, we need to update the law so that farmers and small business persons can be treated in a way that actually help them to recover. Actually more loans may not do that because many of them will indeed not survive.

Farmers and fishermen are among those who have been hit the hardest by Hurricane Floyd. Our loss already to date we know in North Carolina exceeds more than \$1.3 billion. We will, therefore, need more resources, and

that will also be a part of the legislative package.

Mr. Speaker, the people of North Carolina are resilient, and we will come back from the situation, but we will need the help of all America, and, Mr. Speaker, I urge America and my colleagues that in the spirit of North Carolina to work with us, and I thank Americans who have helped and respond to us, and I urge my colleagues to be responsive to the need.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GREEN of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NORTH CAROLINA NEEDS THE HELP OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity, and, as my colleague from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) has just shared with us, I want to talk for a few minutes about some of the real damage that has affected not only my district, but my State, and the truth is some of this can be said for a number of other States and communities up and down the east coast.

I have here with me this evening three charts. The first one is a chart from Wilson County. That is somewhere over 100 to 110 homes there, what we would call mobile homes or trailer homes in North Carolina and across the country. But as you can see, the early stages, all of these homes are under water in some form, and all of them, all, had to be removed and spent their time in shelters.

As bad as this looks, in some places in eastern North Carolina tonight there are thousands of citizens of our State who went into shelters on Wednesday night, one week ago, fearing the worst from Hurricane Floyd, not realizing that a week later they would be there, and fears greater than they had ever anticipated have been realized. Not only have they been in shelters with people they did not know, they are in shelters with their children and with people who, many of whom

have not had an opportunity for a bath in a week, but with the help of federal and State and the good graces of individuals they have been fed, they have been provided a place to stay, and as bad as the conditions are in some places, people are scrambling to help make it better with FEMA's help. And I must, this evening, pay tribute to Director Witt who, I think he and his people have just done an outstanding job in coordinating it.

They had no idea that a week later they would have, in some cases, no home to go home to, no jobs to accept when they went back because the businesses they worked for were gone. If they happen to be farmers, their farms are under water. All the crops this year are gone because in North Carolina we had a bad drought this summer, and what crops were left are now totally under water and gone.

If they happen to have been a tobacco farmer and were able to salvage something, those tobacco barns are under water, and what little tobacco they had in those barns, they are under water. Their tractors, all their equipment and in some cases their homes, their clothing, and the only thing many of them had when they left were the clothes on their back.

It is a tough situation, and in some cases places in my district are still under water, but in places east of us are even worse. There are whole houses under water, and the water has not yet subsided a week later.

This is an additional photograph taken also in Wilson County. As you can see, this was a commercial building, but behind it was supposed to have been farm land. It looks like a lake. I cannot tell you what kind of crops were in it because they are under water.

This is a photograph of one of the towns. I traveled on Monday with the President and a number of other people from the district and Secretaries to Tarboro and over to Pitt County where the East Carolina University is, and today they are facing the brunt of it because the tidewaters have almost reached their high point.

And for those who would think that when we talk of hurricanes they think of the coastline of North Carolina which sticks out; they were talking about the coast. I remind folks that these are areas that have never been affected by flood, some of them not for 500 years that we know of. They are above the 500-year flood plain, and they are flooded.

Most of these people do not have flood insurance because there was no reason to have it. They have lost their businesses; in some cases, their homes; and as I said earlier, every single thing that they hold dear with their memories. Fortunately for most of them, they still are alive.

We have lost a lot of life. Tonight there will be more that will lose their life before it is over with, and we will find them when the waters go down.

But there are some good stories.

On Monday, some people were on a boat checking houses; and they heard someone tapping, a noise on a roof of a house. They crawled up on the house because the boat went right up to it. They knocked a hole in the roof of the house, and out crawled 11 people.

As water started to rise and rising so fast, the people in the house went up, and they kept going up, and they finally went up in the attic, and there was nowhere else to go; and they were trapped.

So there are stories of saving lives and heroism from all the groups you could think of from firemen, to rescue squads, to FEMA, to all groups. I will not try to list them this evening, but they deserve a great deal of credit; and as the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) said, the people in North Carolina are not unlike the people anywhere in America. They are tough folks. They will bounce back, but they need help.

There is a reason we call them Tar Heels. They stick to it, and they get things done. They are tough people.

But we are going to need this Congress to take action on a disaster bill before we go home. Our farmers will not be able to plant next year if they do not get help. They have lost everything. Many of our business people will not be able to continue and provide jobs, and thousands and thousands of people have lost their home and everything they have.

I call on this Congress to take the action that we would take for anyone else in America. We have responded to world crises, it is now time to respond to those of us in North Carolina.

#### THE HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to say, first of all, after listening to my colleagues from North Carolina, that the rest of us in this Chamber feel deeply about the plight of so many people in North Carolina who have suffered greatly through Hurricane Floyd and the resulting floods. No area of the country, Mr. Speaker, has been hit as hard even though people all up and down the East coast have suffered from this tragedy, and I know that I and other colleagues of mine are determined to do what we can to make sure that North Carolinians get the kind of assistance that they need and deserve after this tragedy.

We are here tonight to talk about another situation that calls for action by this Congress, and that has to do with the high cost of prescription drugs for seniors in this country. Thirty-seven percent of our seniors in America have no coverage at all for their prescription

drugs. To be sure, they are on Medicare, which is a Federal health care program; they are all on Medicare. But Medicare does not provide for prescription drug coverage; and so many people are struggling, trying to figure out how to pay the electric bill or the rent or buy food and still take the drugs that their doctors tell them they have to take.

I started hearing about this issue shortly after I was elected to Congress, and whenever I talk to seniors groups I might start out talking about Medicare reform or Social Security reform, but pretty soon we wound up talking about prescription drugs because it was a daily worry for so many people who thought that when they retired they would have enough money to make ends meet. But many of them do not.

I have had people write to me and say that between themselves and their husband they have \$600 a month in prescription drug expenses and they only have \$1300 or \$1350 in a Social Security check. The math does not work; they cannot do it. I have had women write to me and say I do not want my husband to know, but I am not taking my prescription medication because he is sicker than I am, and we cannot both afford to take our medications.

So last year when the Democratic staff on the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight came to me and said we would like to do a study for you of some kind in your district to call attention to a problem or to deal with an issue that you think needs attention, I asked them to do a study on prescription drugs, and the results were astonishing.

What we found is that for the 5 or the 10, makes no difference, for the 5 most commonly prescribed prescription drugs for seniors, seniors, on average, pay twice as much for their medications as the pharmaceutical company's best customers. The best customers are HMOs, hospital chains, and yes, the Federal Government itself.

And let us take a look before turning to some of my colleagues who are here with me tonight, let us just take a look at the chart which shows a comparison between the average retail price that older Americans pay in my First District in Maine compared to the prices that the drug companies charge their most-favored customers. Whether you pick Zocor or Norvasc or Prilosec or Procardia XL or Zolof, in any event, when you add those up, the average price differential in my district when this was taken last year is over 100 percent. Seniors are paying twice as much for their drugs as the drug company's best customers.

A subsequent study showed that seniors in Maine pay 72 percent more than citizens in Canada for the same drugs, same amount, same quantity, and they pay 102 percent more than Mexicans do for their medications, same drug, same quantity, same quality.

That study has now been replicated in a number of areas around the coun-

try, and with me tonight are the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) who has done a lot of work on this issue, been a leader on the prescription drug issue, and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) who has had a study done in her district and is working hard to make sure that seniors get the kind of coverage they deserve.

□ 2100

Before turning over to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN), I would say as a result of these studies we all worked together and developed legislation called the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act, H.R. 664, which has 125 cosponsors in the House. This is a bill that creates no new Federal bureaucracy. It involves virtually no expense to the Federal Government, but it puts the Federal Government on the side of seniors on Medicare; in fact, all Medicare beneficiaries.

Basically, the Federal Government would negotiate reduced prices for seniors as a block. The legislation is very simple. It allows pharmacies to buy drugs for Medicare beneficiaries at the best price given to the Federal Government. We think this would probably lead to price reductions for seniors in their prescription medication by up to 40 percent, at virtually no cost to the Federal Government, with no new Federal bureaucracy.

This is a bill that is simple, cost-free, but the opposition is unbelievable. We will get into the opposition and the big money opposition that is trying to stop this legislation.

I would now like to yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN), who has been working very hard to make sure that her constituents in Florida get the benefit of the kinds of reduced prices for seniors that we know we can achieve.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), first of all, for yielding time but also for his leadership on this piece of legislation. I think many of us would like to kick ourselves because the idea is so easy that we did not think of it before he arrived here. It is so simple in the fact that we do this in other parts of our government already. We do it in the Veterans Administration. They actually go out and use their force of being large buyers for medicine and they are out there and they are actually contracting with the pharmaceutical companies a reduced price for veterans in this country because they have so many people that they can negotiate for; no different than an insurance company does, no different than an HMO does, no different than, quite frankly, in another part of our government that is already doing this in the State of Florida, Medicaid does it. No different.

It is just these are people that are covered by an insurance that the government actually has control over.

So when the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) brought up this issue in